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SOUTHEAST ASIA

CHAPTER 6

The Challenge of Positive Engagement

BILVEER SINGH

IN the early post–cold war era, Russia barely gave Asia Pacific any attention. Little, other than rhetoric, was heard from Russia vis-à-vis the region. This was mainly due to the Atlanticists, under Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev, dominating Russian foreign policy and pursuing a "look West" policy. A more balanced orientation was launched after 1994, following Moscow's disappointment with the West, and this outlook was strengthened when Yevgeny Primakov was appointed foreign minister.

Moscow has subsequently given special attention to Asia Pacific—or, more specifically, to several countries in Asia Pacific—and it is this context that informs Singapore's engagement with Russia. This chapter examines Singapore's worldview and Russia's place in it, Russia's desired and actual roles in Asia Pacific, opportunities and constraints for the region in engaging Russia, and measures to engage Russia positively in the region.

This chapter is based on a number of assumptions: First, that Russia is important in Asia Pacific, geographically as well as politically. Second, that engaging Russia in Asia Pacific affairs is critical for regional prospects for peace, stability, and development. Third, that Russia and countries in the region must make concerted efforts to realize this engagement.

SINGAPORE IN THE POST–COLD WAR ERA

Foreign policy is the front line of defense for small states such as Singapore.[1] Foreign policy and domestic policy are also directly linked, with

the two existing interdependently. Domestic politics must take external circumstances into account, and the domestic domain affects what is undertaken extraneously.

Geographically, Singapore is the smallest and most compact country in Southeast Asia. It is strategically located as a hub of north-south and east-west communications, and being sandwiched between Malaysia to the north and Indonesia to the south has largely shaped its worldview. This has been both an asset and a handicap, and much of Singapore's policies derive from this fact of geography.

In terms of demography, Singapore is a regional anomaly. Ethnic Chinese constitute nearly 78 percent of its population of slightly over three million, Malays 14 percent, and Indians 7 percent. The overwhelming majority makes for, essentially, a Chinese island in a Malay sea—with serious political, economic, and strategic implications for the nation. Singapore may be politically sovereign, but it always needs to consider the sensitivities of the dominant Malay world that surrounds it. Ethnic Chinese may control Singapore, but they are a minority in the region and represent a community that is both distrusted and envied. Singapore has to ensure that its actions are perceived as those of a state dominated by an ethnic Chinese community rather than a Chinese state.

The economic imperative is equally important. Singapore is devoid of natural resources except for skilled manpower and a strategic location. Singapore has survived by adding value to goods and services. It is one of the few places in the world where international trade is more than 300 percent of gross national product. This extreme dependence on international trade has enhanced Singapore's vulnerability. Its present policy of economic regionalization—spearheading investments in China, India, Indonesia, Myanmar, and Vietnam, among other Asian countries—renders the island nation even more vulnerable, while also granting it great benefits. Singapore is easily held hostage to the local environment, as evidenced by the way regional projects have suffered in the recent regional monetary crisis (see Henderson 1998 and Gill 1998). The need to be competitive internationally directly affects domestic politics. For example, introducing a Goods and Services Tax was aimed at improving the republic's international competitiveness, even though there were negative domestic implications.

These elements have underpinned Singapore's foreign policy since independence in August 1965. The key organizing concept is ensuring a

regional balance of power in which the republic can pursue its national interests. Singapore maintains its political, economic, and strategic security through cooperation and friendship, even though it followed an essentially pro-West, pro-U.S. posture during the cold war.

The foreign policy precept of making many friends and having few enemies remains unaltered, but the end of the cold war has made the strategic environment unpredictable. In the post–cold war era, Singapore's foreign policy is primarily focused on Asia Pacific, although Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong is credited with launching the Euro-Asia Summit, which has involved Europe in the region in a more structured manner. Since 1991, Singapore has focused on the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in particular and Asia Pacific in general.

With much of the world in flux, ASEAN offers some stability to the region. Member states are committed to the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA), the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum, and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). While AFTA addresses regional economic challenges, the ARF aims to engage key players in the region, including China and Russia.

Through cooperative endeavors with ASEAN, Singapore has developed closer relations with its neighbors and become more involved in the larger Southeast Asian community. By creating "economic growth triangles" that involve its neighbors, Singapore has demonstrated that its success is in their interest as well. Singapore believes that shared economic growth creates greater incentives for peace and stability.

Strategically, Singapore's foreign policy is drawn to the emergence of a tripartite balance of power in Asia Pacific involving China, Japan, and the United States. Singapore has always worked toward creating a favorable regional balance of power and it regards the situation among the three countries as being the sine qua non to regional peace and stability for the foreseeable future, although Russia and India should not be ignored.

For Singapore, as well as other Asia Pacific countries, the United States remains the leading power for the region, a role that the remarkable restoration of America's economic health has bolstered. Without this economic power base, U.S. regional credibility would suffer. Japan similarly plays a large political and security role in the region, a position supplemented by its economic might, notwithstanding its current difficulties. While there is no regional consensus about Japan's specific

role, anxieties about Japanese atrocities during World War II continue to linger and have been exacerbated by the growth of Japan's military. While this military expansion can be explained in terms of "burden sharing" vis-à-vis U.S. "burden shedding," Singapore continues to view the U.S.-Japan alliance as critical for regional stability.

In the past, China counterbalanced the two superpowers, but in the new security environment China is a credible force in its own right, having benefited from the downsizing of the U.S. and Russian presence in the region. China's military capability has grown as rapidly as its economy, and both have raised concerns about Beijing's real intentions. China obviously cannot be ignored. Singapore believes that China must be engaged and given a stake in the emerging Asia Pacific community.

Closer to home, Singapore is also cognizant of the growing assertiveness of India and Russia. Economic reform in these countries has given Singapore a window of opportunity to engage and, in the case of India, various government-to-government deals have been signed.

Declining interest in Russia is a marked feature of Singapore's foreign policy since 1991, however. Singapore was concerned about the Soviet threat during 1978–1985 and played an important role in engaging Gorbachev's Soviet Union, but various factors have since conspired to push Russia lower down the agenda. These would include uncertainty about post-Soviet Russia, limited economic opportunities due to the undeveloped Russian economy, the inward orientation of Russia's leadership, and Russia's focus on Asian countries other than Singapore. Perhaps most critically, as Russia is no longer a security threat, the need to engage Russia is no longer pressing, so Singapore has allowed itself to be preoccupied with challenges on other fronts.

Singapore's primary interest in Russia is now economic, though this has been developing at a snail's pace with bilateral agreements to facilitate trade and economic interaction only being signed slowly. On the other hand, Singapore has actively supported the multilateral engagement of Russia—through the ARF, the ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference, and the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council—and it has endorsed Russia's participation in APEC. This is mainly driven by Singapore's interest in involving as many powers as possible in the region.

Overall, the post–cold war era has thrown up many challenges for Singapore's foreign policy and the republic has had to make adjustments, including in labor rights and vis-à-vis migrant labor. Singapore's leadership has continued to strengthen security ties with the United

States, as evidenced by agreeing to provide access to the new Changi Naval Base.

RUSSIA'S ROLE IN ASIA PACIFIC

Since the late 1980s, the enormous political and economic changes that have engulfed the Soviet Union have determined Russia's policy toward Asia Pacific. At the same time, Asia Pacific, in particular East Asia, has come into its own. The region became a major player in the world economy in 1992 when its share of world GNP reached 25 percent, as compared with 4 percent in 1960 (Koh 1995, 1).

Russia remains the largest country in the world geographically and a great military power, but its political influence is much weaker than the Soviet Union's. The implosion of the Soviet Union and its replacement with the weak Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), of which the Russian Federation is one of fifteen republics, largely explains this diminished influence. Russia's continuing political, economic, and social instability; the ongoing power struggles in Moscow; Russia's weak economic base; and its relative military weakness—due especially to the downsizing of its Asian Pacific presence—also account for this decreased influence.

The Atlanticists versus the Eurasianists in Russian Foreign Policy

Since 1991, Russia's role in Asia Pacific has been a function of internal Russian debate between Atlanticists and Eurasianists. The former advocate a "look West" policy and the latter suggest an orientation that focuses more on the East (see Pikayev 1996). The replacement of Andrei Kozyrev as foreign minister with Yevgeny Primakov in early 1996 reflected a shift from the Atlanticist view to the Eurasianist one.

With the strong endorsement of President Boris Yeltsin, the newly established Russian Federation first launched an essentially pro-West foreign policy. Leaders argued that the new republic should adopt the West as a political, economic, and social model as a means to ensure that it remained a great European power. Kozyrev suggested that this was the only option that would promote Russia's national interest. Indeed, the West's political endorsement was deemed essential if the Russian Federation was to emerge as a successor state of the Soviet Union—and retain the permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council. It was

also argued that the West was the best positioned economically and technologically to bail Russia out of its economic predicament, and working with the United States, the sole superpower, was critical.

The West welcomed Moscow's "look West" policy. The interest of the vanquished superpower in joining the West's ranks symbolized the West's final victory over communism and in the cold war. It also fitted with the West's hope that the new Russia would rid itself of totalitarianism and institute democratic practices, leading to a new "zone of peace" as "democracies do not go to war with each other."

The Eurasianists, a coalition of communists, conservatives, and nationalists, were very critical of this pro-West stance. They argued that Russia's traditional security concerns emanated from the south and east rather than the west. They feared that close ties with the West could lead to Russia being co-opted into the West's security sphere, thereby alienating Russia from the Muslim world as well as from key Asian countries. They felt that Moscow should instead build ties with Asia, especially China, Japan, India, the Koreas, ASEAN, and the Muslim world. Developing ties with the Muslim world was also important for the five Muslim-dominated states in Central Asia that had emerged from the former Soviet Union.[2] Pragmatists also argued that Russia's future lay with the East, especially the economically dynamic Pacific Rim.

In the face of this conservative challenge, the Atlanticist domination of Russian foreign policy ended in late 1992. In January 1993, a discernible shift could be detected as Yeltsin declared during a state visit to India that Moscow's "one-track" focus on the West "had come and gone." He added that "the recent series of visits to South Korea, China, and now India is indicative of the fact that we are moving away from a western emphasis in Russian diplomacy." He suggested that Russia's initial pro-West orientation was largely tactical in nature: "Russia's independent foreign policy started with the West. It started with the United States and we believe that this was justified. We had to lay the main foundations—that is, to prepare a detailed treaty on the global reduction and elimination of strategic nuclear weapons—on the basis of which it would be easier, afterward, to build relations with any country, be it in the West or East, Europe or Asia."[3]

Whatever the real motives for the change in orientation, several factors had rendered Moscow's pro-West foreign policy untenable. The rise of Russian nationalism was one such factor, most evident in the growing strength of ultranationalists under the leadership of Vladimir

Zhirinovsky after the December 1993 elections. The nationalists rejected Moscow's role of being junior partner to the West, especially vis-à-vis the United States. The coalition of nationalists and conservatives maintained that Kozyrev's approach amounted to making concessions to the West and whittling away Moscow's past superpower status. Russia's security interests were also perceived as being undermined by, for example, Kozyrev's initial support for the West's sanctions against Serbia. This was seen as being counter to Russia's long kinship with its Slavic brethren.

The rising role of the Russian military was also important in changing the direction of Moscow's foreign policy. The failure of the civilian-democrats to address the security problems and the emergence of a "fire belt" around Russia's southern and eastern borders compelled the military to adopt its own largely independent foreign policy in the region. In order to stall withdrawal from bases in the former Soviet Union, the Russian military adopted a more proactive policy in the near abroad. With this policy, the military hoped it would not have to use resources for defending the border, financing housing and other logistical needs of returning troops, or supporting peacekeeping operations. In addition to maintaining a sphere of influence in the region, the military also protected ethnic Russians.

The West's decision to enlarge the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to include former Soviet territories and allies contributed too to weakening the pro-West orientation and strengthening the nationalist-conservative thrust. The Atlanticists had hoped that the Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) would emerge as the main security mechanism in Europe, thereby leading to the disbanding of NATO, the key cold war threat to the Soviet Union. When this did not happen, the Atlanticists lost standing. Even though the Partnership for Peace program was endorsed in January 1994, with ten of the CIS states joining, including Russia in June 1995, Moscow publicly opposed NATO's enlargement. Russian Defense Minister Pavel Grachev vowed that if NATO went ahead with its plans, Moscow would seek "countermeasures to safeguard its own security," including "partners in the east" (*Financial Times Weekend* 10–11 February 1996).

By 1993, Moscow had reached the point where it needed to reassert itself—even if this meant exacerbating tensions with the West. It was now bereft of its internal and external empire; it had lost its ideological compass; it was struggling with political, economic, social, and military

difficulties; it was made to feel supplicant; and a crisis of confidence pervaded all levels of Russian society. This led to the reorientation of Moscow's foreign policy, with Asia Pacific becoming more important than at anytime since the Russian Federation was created in the Soviet Union's wake.

Asia Pacific's Importance to Russia

Russia perceives the Far East as a gateway to Asia Pacific, while Asia Pacific views the Russian Far East as a window to Russia itself—both parties see value in engaging each other. Russia also sees its role in Asia Pacific as having regional and global implications: it feels that it is a great—albeit weakened—power and, as such, its activities in the region have global significance. And by being accepted as part of the Asia Pacific security framework, along with China, Japan, and the United States, Russia becomes part of the emerging regional balance of power.

Russia recognizes that it must interact more with Asia Pacific, and its desire to be part of the ARF as a dialogue partner, as well as the APEC and Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) processes, can be viewed in this light. Russia is also aware that the Pacific Rim has tremendous unrealized economic potential and that the natural resources of the Russian Far East are potentially very attractive to oil-deficient countries such as Japan and possibly China.

Russia perceives itself as a key player in Northeast Asian security. It can play a positive role vis-à-vis the Korean peninsula, China, Southeast Asia (by supporting the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapons-Free Zone), and in the South China Sea dispute. Both regionally and internationally, Russia has pushed for participation in the region's different forums where it can provide balance vis-à-vis China, Japan, or the United States. The absence of ideological conflict since 1991 and the rise of geoeconomics have facilitated Russia's quest for a role in Asia Pacific.

Moscow's relations with China and Japan, the key targets of Russia's Asia Pacific diplomacy, must be considered in historical context. The cold war period, where geopolitical and geostrategic interests were foremost, defined Moscow's relations with East Asian countries. Russia and China were at loggerheads from the late 1950s, and Russia and Japan since 1945. Relations in both cases began to improve in the late 1980s.

That Russia was initially more keen to better ties with Japan than China is understandable. Japan is an integral member of the developed world and it represents economic benefits. Yet the key to improving

bilateral relations is solving the Northern Territories dispute, which has plagued bilateral relations since 1945 and resulted in no peace treaty being signed between the two countries at the end of World War II. A clearer policy vis-à-vis China emerged after the December 1993 elections. It was also at this point—in the face of domestic opposition and the West's failure to deliver economic assistance—that Moscow lost interest in sustaining its pro-West policy.

Following the 1969 border war, Sino-Soviet ties ebbed to their lowest level. The cause was divergent and competing political, economic, and ideological stances, with each country viewing the other as the principal threat to its national security. A breakthrough only occurred when President Mikhail Gorbachev visited Beijing in May 1989 and formalized Sino-Soviet relations. China was not unhappy with the demise of the Soviet Union, its rival in the north, although it feared being infected with the democratic reforms Gorbachev was attempting in Moscow. Paradoxically, the Soviet collapse made Russia an attractive strategic partner for China.

Russo-Chinese economic relations have expanded rapidly since 1991, with China becoming Russia's second largest trading partner. Both countries have pledged not to interfere in each other's internal affairs, with China accepting Moscow's policies in Chechnya, and Russia supporting Beijing's policies in Taiwan, Tibet, and Xinjiang. Bilateral military ties have also improved dramatically. Since 1992, there have been high-level military cooperation, intelligence exchanges, and regular visits of military chiefs. The two countries have ceased nuclear targeting of each other, and they have agreed on major troop reductions along their mutual border, as well as massive sales of Russian arms to China. Russia's need for hard currency largely motivated these sales, and China's growing economy has meant it can afford wide-ranging modernization of its army, navy, and air force. Russia has also benefited from the West's denial of access for China to advanced weapons systems following the Tiananmen Square Incident of 1989.

In many ways, China has become the center piece of Moscow's Asia Pacific policy (Menon 1997; Blank 1997b). A strategic partnership is developing based on a pragmatic convergence of short- and medium-term interests, rather than abiding commonalties of purpose. The removal of the military threat from the north, and the Russian leadership's willingness to work closely with Beijing have benefited China, especially in the face of the political, economic, and ideological pressures from the

West. In addition to growing agreement on how to manage relations with the West, both Moscow and Beijing find their partnership useful vis-à-vis the tumultuous Central Asian region where both have an abiding interest in political stability. The entire area, which includes China's Xinjiang Province and the newly independent Central Asian republics, is Islamic in character, and both Moscow and Beijing want peace to prevail and the rise of radical Islam stopped. Unlike during the Great Game of the nineteenth century, the two countries are cooperating closely—even while they exploit the region's rich resources. Moscow also views its friendship with China as valuable for helping gain acceptance in Asia Pacific. Neither the United States nor Japan is keen to sponsor Russia's entry into the region as Moscow would only undercut their respective influences.

Two factors have figured prominently in bringing about the close Russo-Chinese partnership. The first is Moscow and Beijing's shared belief that the post–cold war world order should be multipolar and that the emergence of a sole hegemonic superpower—the United States—should be resisted. The second factor is economic. With the Chinese economy booming but in need of upgrading, Russia is a useful partner due in part to its long history of economic relations with China. Most importantly, Russia is also willing to export strategic technologies to China almost without constraint.

Yet problems do still underlie Russo-Chinese relations. At the urging of nationalists, Russia is loathe to grant China access to the Russian Far East, given China's regional demographic superiority and the backdrop of Chinese regional territorial claims. Also, as China is generally feared in East Asia, Moscow has tried to maintain a distance from Beijing so as not to have to support it against countries in the region, especially in Southeast Asia.

Compared with China, Moscow's relations with other Asia Pacific countries have developed far more slowly, mainly due to the lack of commonality of interests. Moscow's relations with Japan, a close American ally, must also be understood against the backdrop of the cold war, when cool Soviet-Japanese relations were largely the order of the day. The Soviets did try to undermine U.S.-Japanese security relations and try to gain access to Japanese technology and capital resources for developing the Russian Far East, but without much success. The Soviet Union was not attractive for Japanese investors and Japanese domestic politics made improved ties conditional on the return of the disputed Northern

Territories to Japan. When Sino-Soviet relations began to thaw in the late 1980s, Moscow was even less prepared to make concessions to Japan. This posture has continued in the post-Soviet period despite Yeltsin's attempts to improve relations with Japan.

Generally, Moscow's relations with other East Asian countries—Taiwan, both Koreas, and ASEAN members—have similarly been a function of the cold war. With the goal of containing Chinese and U.S. power and influence, Moscow established political, economic, and military ties with India, Vietnam, North Korea, and Mongolia. At the end of the cold war and with its empire in turmoil, Russia was able to divest itself of the economic burden and political risk associated with supporting Vietnam and North Korea. Neither Vietnam nor North Korea were particularly useful or valuable anymore. Vietnam has been handy geopolitically as a foil for China and as a warning to the noncommunist ASEAN states. However, Gorbachev's reforms pressured Hanoi to withdraw from Cambodia, embrace economic reforms, and improve ties with the United States, China, and ASEAN states. Post-Soviet Russia has largely continued friendly relations with Southeast Asian countries, even though its diplomacy has hardly been proactive.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS IN ENGAGING RUSSIA

Various opportunities and constraints have affected the recent course of relations between Russia and Asia Pacific countries. Engaging Russia economically and politically is attractive to Asia Pacific countries, given its endowment in natural resources and the post–cold war changes in its political and economic system. At the same time, Russia's realization that it has security interests in Northeast Asia and that it is a player in the Northeast Asian security equation has raised concerns among security planners in the region. Yet its role is more likely to be that of balancing the great powers in the region. Although Russia is weakened and somewhat marginalized, it cannot be ignored. It is helpful that Russia now views itself more as an Asia Pacific country, and the rise of Eurasianists in policy making has been a further boost. The possible development of a land oil route from the Caspian Sea to East Asia has created a concrete opportunity for engaging Russia. And despite the weakness of Russia's manufacturing sector, its ability and willingness to sell advanced weapons has meant that Moscow is a favored trading partner.

At the same time, various constraints need to be borne in mind. Even though Russia is an old state, its new governing system is relatively unstable and riddled with problems. Russia's weak economic base is also structurally unsound. The country continues to be beset with political uncertainty, crises of confidence, and a high crime rate. The Russian government's inability to prioritize is a significant obstacle to tackling problems, as is the current lack of political will. Combined with centuries of neglect, these problems continue to color Moscow's attitude toward the Far East.

Many in Moscow fear that if the Russian Far East succeeds economically, pressures for autonomy or even independence may grow. So the past attitude of "don't know and don't care" continues. The political elite was never interested in the Russian Far East and no strong figure pushed for a greater commitment toward the region. These perspectives hindered the growth of the Russian Far East as well as Russia's engagement with Asia Pacific. Moscow also continues to fear that granting China and Japan access to the Russian Far East could lead to it falling under their influence or, worse, control. Compared to Beijing and Tokyo, the Russian Far East is far from Moscow and its political and economic influence. Finally, Moscow's recent interest in Asia Pacific may be motivated less by positive intent than by the trouble it is facing in the West, such as NATO expansion. Russia's present friendly attitude toward Asia Pacific may not necessarily continue if it resolves its difficulties with the West.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE FOR POSITIVE ENGAGEMENT

Engaging Russia in Asia Pacific is desirable, but many obstacles to this happening remain. Since 1991, Russia's leadership has been preoccupied with domestic concerns and has given little attention to the outside world. Relentless domestic instability has cast a shadow over Russia's present and future. The problem of the Yeltsin succession—especially given his age and health concerns—is troubling. As a result, many countries, including Asian Pacific ones, maintain a "watching brief" over Russia and, although trade with Russia continues, they choose not to undertake long-term investment projects until there is some modicum of stability.

Yet, despite its problems, Asia Pacific would do well not to ignore

Russia. Geographically, Russia is the largest state in the world, encompassing the Eurasian land mass from the Atlantic to the Pacific Oceans. It is a nuclear power, it is both a European and an Asia Pacific power, it is rich with natural resources, and, not insignificantly, it is one of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council. All these facts make Russia formidable and it is probably only a question of time before it again becomes a world-class power.

Asia Pacific wants a stable Russia, so countries in the region have encouraged, induced, and welcomed Russian engagement. In regional organizations, Russia became an ASEAN dialogue partner in July 1996 (it and China had been "consultative partners" since 1991); it is a founding member of the ARF, and, in November 1997, it became a member of APEC. ASEAN member states are also prepared to welcome Russia as a member of ASEM, although this is really the European Union's decision.

The ASEAN approach to Russia—that of engagement—coincides with its approach to all the major powers in the region. This policy is one of necessity, not choice, as engagement is a prerequisite for peace and stability. Although Russia is weakened, the philosophy remains that it is better to have Russia "within," rather than "without," and that leaving such a major power out of the regional security framework would be dangerous. While relations in Asia Pacific are dominated by the triangle of China, Japan, and the United States, Moscow's policies since 1993 especially have strongly signaled that Russia expects to join the three-party power configuration. Improving ties between Russia and Asia Pacific countries such as China and Japan reflect Russia's growing role in the region.

Enhancing regional security has been the prime motivation behind the policy of engaging Russia in the political, economic, and security realms. Bilateralism and multilateralism have been the modalities, giving each country the opportunity to work on bilateral relations at their own pace while at the same time synchronizing multilateral relations. This approach suggests that Moscow can simultaneously be a European and an Asia Pacific power, and that it is welcomed as a partner in the region.

To date, Russia has utilized this approach to its benefit. Bereft of other instruments available to great powers, Moscow has worked since 1991 to enhance bilateral relations and multilateral participation in different political, economic, and security regional organizations. Its weak

commercial and industrial sectors have not deterred bilateral interaction, with China being Russia's leading arms market the last few years (Blank 1997a, 1–8). Unlike in the cold war period, Russia's need for hard currency is primarily driving these arms exports. Russia has also sold military hardware to almost all Southeast Asian countries, thereby breaking what was essentially a "Western arms grid" in the region in previous decades.[4]

SINGAPORE-RUSSIAN RELATIONS

As a small state, Singapore had to adjust quickly to the global changes unleashed by the collapse of the cold war order and the implosion of the Soviet Union in 1991. On January 12, 1992, Singapore recognized the twelve former Soviet republics, with the exception of the three Baltic nations, as sovereign and independent states. Compared to its comprehensive relations with China, Japan, the United States, or even India, Singapore's relations with Russia are modest. Singapore's primary interest in Russia at this point is in developing commercial relations (Hong 1998). Diplomatic exchanges have been pursued, though on an intermittent basis. For instance, in March 1992, a Russian parliamentary team visited Singapore. A year later, Russian Vice President Alexander Rutskoi passed through Singapore during a swing in the region. In July 1993, Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev visited and, in December 1994, Russian parliamentarians came to Singapore. In July 1996, the Singapore and Russian foreign ministries signed a protocol on bilateral consultations. Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Grigory Karasin visited Singapore in April 1997.

More substantial efforts have been made in terms of economic ties. Singapore is presently Russia's largest trading partner in Southeast Asia. In 1996 and 1997, Russia was Singapore's twenty-sixth largest trading partner and its twentieth largest market for exports. Several Singapore Trade Development Board missions have gone to Russia. In November 1994, the Singapore Manufacturers Association signed a cooperation pact with the Russian Federation's Chamber of Commerce and Industry to promote bilateral trade. In October 1996, the Russian Foreign Investment Promotion Centre established a representative office in Singapore to promote Russian trade with Asia Pacific. There has also been a steady increase in interagency cooperation, with the Singapore Inland Revenue and Economic Development Board negotiating with its

Russian counterparts to finalize a Double Taxation and Investment Guarantee Agreement.

Additionally, Singapore has welcomed Russia's participation in various regional multilateral organizations. Singapore and Russia have joined efforts in the ASEAN Dialogue Partners/ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference, the ARF, and APEC, and Singapore has supported Russia's participation in ASEM. Singapore regards Russia as an important player by virtue of its United Nations Security Council seat and its growing relations with Asian Pacific countries such as China.

Through these policies and postures, Singapore hopes to achieve a number of goals. First, it hopes to continue mutually beneficial economic relations with Russia, ties that have existed for more than thirty years. Second, in view of Russia's economic reforms, Singapore hopes to take advantage of various opportunities to tap the demand for consumer goods in the Russian Federation. Third, and probably most importantly in terms of political-strategic goals, Singapore hopes to engage Russia so that it will help balance power in Asia Pacific to the benefit of all concerned. Involving Russia in the region is far more beneficial than excluding it; having a stake in the region will compel Russia to play a constructive role in the region.

CONCLUSION

At the birth of the Russian Federation in 1991, an Atlanticist foreign policy focusing on the West was adopted. A more balanced approach was followed from 1993 in which the East, mainly countries in Asia Pacific, received greater attention. From that time, Moscow projected itself as a power in Asia Pacific, concerning itself primarily with China—whom it now regards as a strategic partner. China's importance in Russia's foreign policy calculus has grown in direct relation to the Russo-American dispute over NATO's eastward enlargement and Moscow's dismay with the limited technological and economic assistance the West provided. Moscow felt betrayed on both issues, and this forced the Russian leadership to undertake a more autonomous course in foreign policy. As Asian Pacific countries came to realize the peril of excluding Russia from the region, a win-win situation was created and Russian relations with Asia Pacific have since improved markedly. A major task confronting countries in Asia Pacific is ensuring that relations with Russia are placed on a more permanent footing and are not subject to the vagaries of Moscow's

interests elsewhere. Engaging Russia in Asia Pacific is one of the key challenges facing diplomacy in the region as the new millennium approaches.

NOTES

1. For details of Singapore's foreign policy, see Singh (1989) and Koh (1998, 19–26, 175–231).

2. For a good survey of the changing emphasis of Russia's foreign policy due to this internal debate, see Rozman (1997).

3. This statement was made on Russian television on January 25, 1993. See Crow (1994).

4. For more details, see Singh (1995, 26–68) and Singh and Singh (1997, 41–43, 73–87).

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